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Students beware of your rage!

By BILL WETTLER

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There are good reasons to be concerned about organized demonstrations coming to Saudi Arabia; especially if the organizers are using the term, "day of rage." While one can understand the interest in sharing the enthusiasm sweeping the Middle East, I think there are lessons from history, which might teach us to be wary of confusing a desire for a government to improve itself with mindless vindictiveness.

Even worse than that would be a self-centered bid for more lifestyle subsidies at the expense of planned city developments. More often than not, when people let rage blind them, they accomplish just the opposite of what they set out to do. One should use the press and the courts to solve injustices. When corruption gets in the way, peaceful civil resistance can make sense. But even that can be abused.

Indian leader M. K. Gandhi, who is thought of as a father of noncooperation as a form of civil resistance, warned of this himself. He didn't advise the masses to just run out one arbitrary day and stage a huge country crippling protest against the government

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country-cripping protest against the government.

There are steps to be taken to get one's grievances heard and responded to and when those steps are skipped, one becomes guilty of rash and shameful behavior.

There are good examples and bad examples. As a good example, we should remember the Indian Hindus and Muslims who worked so well together to rid their country of cruel racist British overlordship in India. As a bad example, we should remember how those same two groups failed to work together after they attained their independence. The country was split between them and border fighting continues to this day.

Those planning for a day of demonstrations ought to consider whether, by having such a day, they are skipping a few steps.

I can think of, at least, ten questions which any person or group of people in any country might ask themselves if they have grievances.

- How can I help the people I perceive as victims of human rights abuses in a legal way or how can I help myself in a legal way if I believe I am such a victim?
- Have I made, or have we (if we are a group) made our grievances known to the responsible party?
- Can I define my position and recommend a solution that gives the responsible party a clear and reasonable understanding of how I believe they should act?
- Have I or has anyone written to the newspapers about the injustices we are concerned about?
- If I disagree with an ideology or cultural tradition, is my position a minority or majority position? (Minorities can rarely reasonably expect as much representation as the majority).
- If my position is a minority position, but I am a victim of human rights abuse, can I content myself with an awareness raising campaign and wait patiently?
- Have we filed a formal complaint or hired a lawyer?
- Have my efforts been defeated by corruption?
- Can I identify the source and scope of the corruption?
- If bad laws are the issue, shall we campaign for better laws or better politicians or both?

I think the need to answer these questions is self-

evident. A person who has not thought all this through is liable to get confused and to be misled and even used by people who have the wrong agenda.

Where have we seen that happen before? Let me tell you a story, the details of which are not easily confirmed, but which should, nonetheless, illustrate the danger of rash impulsive behavior. This is a story of students lacking forethought and adequate commitment to ethics whose actions were actually counterproductive to their goals. The story is one I think most people in this region of the world might find interesting considering this is the region most affected by their actions. Read on and consider the moral.

This story is about Iran and Iranians who have had a long-standing problem with the US. This story is also about the US presidents that have had to deal with Iran — some good and some bad. Bear with my history lesson while I build up to the moral of my story.

Who were the good presidents? There were not many and maybe just one. I would argue that Carter was good even though he was the president in office when the Iranians attacked the US Embassy and took 52 Americans hostage. What did Carter do to upset them so much? The answer is really quite ridiculous. Carter, following the bad advice of Henry Kissinger, merely welcomed the ailing Shah to medical care in the US. He also naively believed Kissinger, who said that the Iranian people loved the Shah and said as much in public. Iranians had reason to be upset, but was such an unethical violation of international laws and human rights proportional to what Carter did?

Considering what President Eisenhower did to Iran with British Prime Minister Churchill in 1953, the Iranians had reason to be angry much earlier than this with somebody else — not Carter. If you don't know, do a Google search with the words, "Operation Ajax," which will lead you to articles explaining how they covertly replaced their democratic leader with a puppet dictator.

The Iranians were only just then liberating themselves from that mischief.

But by having taken, for over a year, 52 personnel at the US Embassy in Tehran as hostages, militant students effectively made Carter's popularity in the US plummet and caused him to be defeated in the polls. Another way of saying this is that these students helped put pro-Israeli Ronald Reagan into office as his replacement.

Carter has been misunderstood in Iran and maybe the whole Arab world. What did the Iranians know except

that Carter was in office during the Islamic revolution and he welcomed the Shah to the US? Let's look at some more facts. Carter brokered the Camp David Accords, which led the Zionists to relinquish the land they stole from Egypt. If Reagan were in office at that time, he would have done just the opposite and helped the Zionists to keep the Sinai Peninsula.

While much of the Arab world has long resented Egypt's recognition of Israel and therefore has viewed pictures of Carter holding hands with Begin and Sadat with disgust, there are a few points this region should bear in mind. Carter and Sadat were better men than Reagan and Mubarak. US foreign policy under these presidents was very different. Carter was warning the country about the pro-Israeli lobby while Reagan cultivated that lobby, relied on them and did their bidding.

Let's look at some more facts. Carter has written extensively on the predicament that Zionists have created for the Middle East and the world. But do the Iranians know this? No. Carter was guilty of only one faux pas. He listened to Kissinger who fed him misinformation about Iran and about the Shah.

To this day, I don't understand why a Democratic president trusted and consulted with a man from the opposite party with a history of engaging in dubious conflict of interest activities and which, in this case, ultimately led to Carter getting replaced by a Republican president.

The worst part of this story is that the Iranians played into Kissinger's hands. Regretfully, Carter's efforts to bring peace to the region were probably sabotaged by, more than anything or anyone else, the Iranians who allowed their blind rage to be exploited by Kissinger. They do not realize that both Carter and they were duped by Kissinger into unwittingly helping him put a Republican back into the president's office — in this case, one who happened to be pro-Israeli.

The moral should be roughly understood as: Don't let someone with an agenda take advantage of your rage and blind you to the correct answers to questions one through ten and don't act like destructive vigilantes rather than constructive, ethical power brokers truly interested in justice.

— *Bill Wettler is a global issues teacher at Dhahran Ahliyya School. His e-mail is bwettler@hotmail.com*

ABRAR

Mar 10, 2011 11:46

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Very true!..what have the Tunisian, Egyption people achieved by protests and over-throwing their leaders?.....Finally they dont have a stable government, no safety and security of people an property. Loss of income etc.

They dont have a leader and they are not able to select a leader. what's the result of the revolt. People should observe, think before they act!

**VASANTHKUMAR
HEGDE**

Mar 10, 2011 11:49

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I am a responsible citizen of democratic INDIA and I know what is going on in my country and I am ashamed of it. In simple word, I say that in the name of democracy INDIA is ruled by corrupt politicians with criminal background and they win election using money power, mussle power and other unethical ways. To be very frank, majority of educated persons who are honest do not vote in the election. What I would like to state that the set up what is there in Saudi Arabia is very fine method of governanance provided the ultimate leadership are honest and bother of masses who need help to lead respectful life. Dear brothers and sisters, do not get into chaos like we have in INDIA in the name of democracy. God bless you all. I finally would like to say that I worked in this country almost 20 years and liked to stay here though I am a HINDU. God bless Saudi Arabia.

LEAH JOY

Mar 10, 2011 11:50

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Wow! This is mind opening. So young Saudi people, read this article well and learn from this. Be careful with your rage. Saudi is a rich, well respected and progressive country under the leadership of His Highness, if you go out to the streets for the reason of bringing the monarchy down then the big question is, are you sure that the change is for the better of the Saudi people or the country as a whole or for worst? Think children.. think.

ROBERT OSBORNE

Mar 10, 2011 11:54

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An excellent article, one that (if people take time to read it) provides excellent advice to carefully consider one's "rage" against the context of what one really is striving for. I hope that people here in Saudi Arabia will take the constructive steps to change, logically, safely and democratically, rather than through "rage" and emotional outbursts, which will only lead to violence and destruction.

SAMEEHA

Mar 10, 2011 12:39

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I recently had the good fortune of reading ur article. It was well written and contained sound practical advice to the public of Saudi Arabia. As an expat I was not at all interested in the internal affairs of the kingdom, but from a few weeks after watching whats happening in the neighboring countries I am very much upset with the situation. Now I am realizing how much I am concerned about this country, because my family is enjoying a peaceful and happy life here. You pointed out several things which we didn't know earlier. Thank for letting us know about "operation ajax". We should learn a lesson from that..

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